

TESTIMONY

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Hearing of the United States Senate Cancer Coalition

National Cancer Legislative Advisory Committee Report
Conquering Cancer: A National Battle Plan to Eradicate Cancer in
Our Lifetime

October 10, 2001

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Sam Brownback
Co-Chairs

Testimony before the Senate Cancer Coalition
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On behalf of the twenty-one members of the National Cancer Legislation Advisory Committee (NCLAC), and the more than 250 experts who contributed information to NCLAC's work over the past two years, we thank you, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Sam Brownback, for convening this hearing regarding NCLAC's report, *Conquering Cancer: A National Battle Plan to Eradicate Cancer in our Lifetime*.

We are grateful to you, Senator Feinstein, for your vision in being the driving force behind the formation of NCLAC and its efforts. As Vice-Chair of the National Dialogue on Cancer, which is co-chaired by George and Barbara Bush, you challenged the Dialogue's Collaborating Partners to discuss and develop new ideas to accelerate our progress against cancer, with the ultimate mission of eradicating cancer as a major public health problem at the earliest possible time. Recognizing the urgency of the problem that cancer presents and that public policy is an essential ingredient in conquering it, in 1999, Senator Feinstein asked Dr. Vincent DeVita and I to co-chair and assemble a panel of experts from across the range of the cancer system. She charged the resulting group of experts – NCLAC - with the task of developing updated policy recommendations to build on the strengths and success of the National Cancer Act of 1971 and other groundbreaking studies while identifying new opportunities in scientific discovery and application to eradicate cancer in the 21st century.

We very much appreciate the work of both Senators Feinstein and Brownback, through the Senate Cancer Coalition, in helping to lead the policy debate in our nation's war against cancer. At the same time, we have all been deeply affected by the tragic events of Tuesday, September 11. Indeed, the brutal acts of terrorism committed against our nation have shocked and outraged people throughout the world. In the days and weeks ahead, we will continue to mourn our nation's loss. But taking our lead from the President and Congress, we will not be deterred from our important work. In that regard, we thank you again, Senators Feinstein and Brownback, for scheduling this hearing in this very busy time. Like you, the members of NCLAC have responded to the recent events with a renewed sense of purpose to our goal of preserving and protecting human life. It is in that spirit that we submit to you NCLAC's final report.

Several NCLAC members are on this panel and also present in the room today, and I would like to acknowledge and thank all of them for the dedication and enthusiasm they put into this effort and producing the final report. You will hear from four of these members shortly, who will present the report's twelve goals.

NCLAC's effort really was the first of its kind in bringing together the full range of scientists and cancer survivors, patient advocates and health providers, non-profit leaders and biotechnology executives from all parts of the cancer system to contribute information in a broad, open process of interviews, agency presentations, and roundtable discussions. NCLAC first conducted an extensive review of the more recent, leading articles and reports that really formed the backbone of our work. These included *Cancer at a Crossroads* (1994), *The March Research Task Force Report* (1998), and cancer reports from the Institute of Medicine and evaluations of the national cancer program by the President's Cancer Panel, among others. Indeed, several of NCLAC's members authored, chaired, and/or participated in producing these earlier reports. In total, more than 250 leaders, experts, survivors and advocates from the cancer and public health communities contributed their personal testimony, special insights and individual perspectives to this report. After more than a year and a half of exhaustive literature review, dozens of presentations, interviews and meetings, as well as eight full-day roundtable sessions held across the country, NCLAC is pleased to present its report, which indeed is a community-driven and community-owned report. In short, it belongs to everyone.

While with this delivery of the report NCLAC's work is done, I believe I speak on behalf of all NCLAC's members and the more than 250 others who contributed to this process when I say we are eager for the cancer community to review the report, embrace its recommendations in whole or part, and lead efforts to collaboratively advance these recommendations toward translation to legislation.

I will now turn the microphone over to my co-chair, Vince DeVita, and then to NCLAC members George VandeWoude, Anna Barker, Susan Parsons, and Amy Langer.